



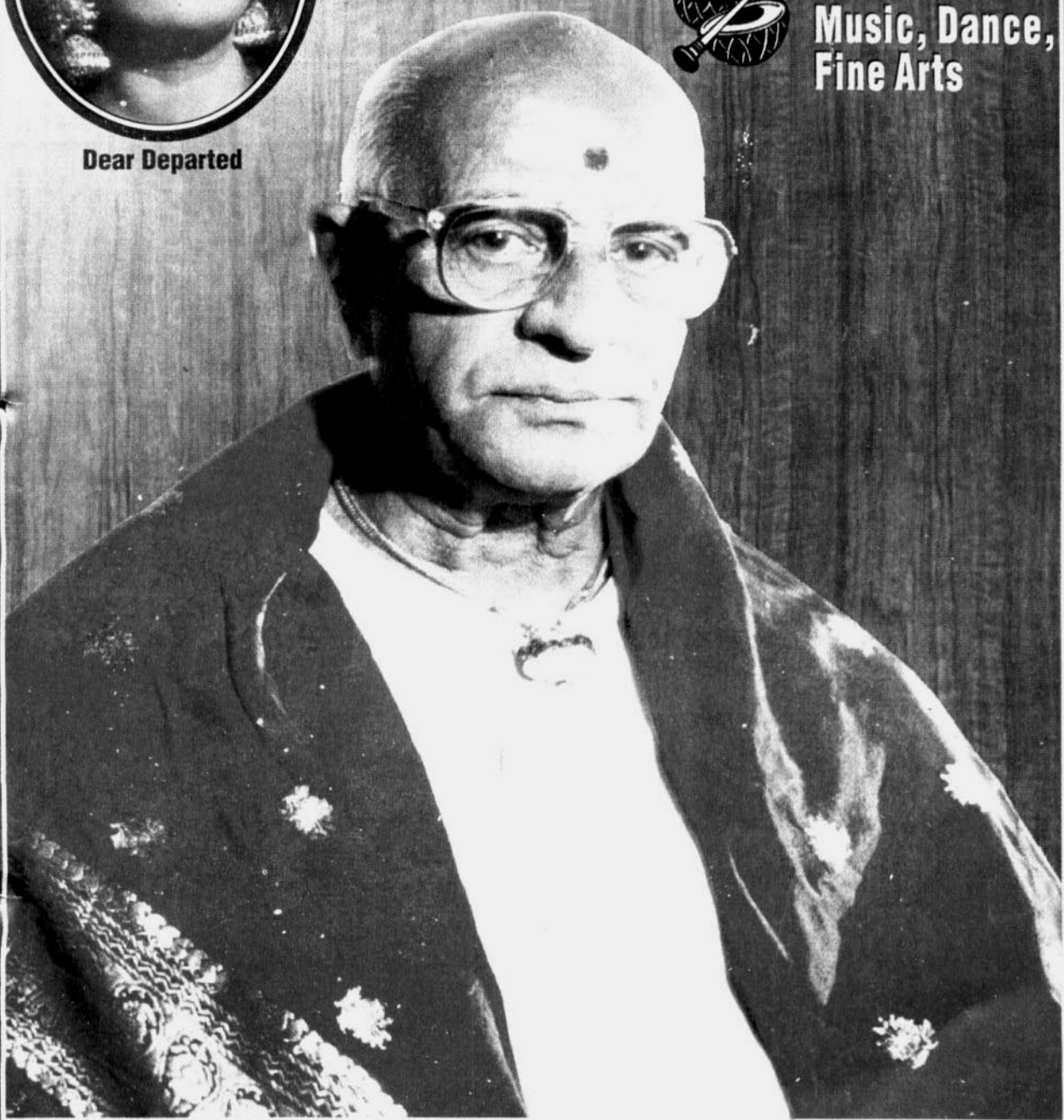
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PHOENIX

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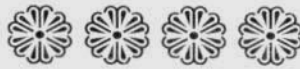
**Journal on
Music, Dance,
Fine Arts**



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Cover Photo by

The late N. Sunderraj

From the Editor

Around the same time when this journal was launched, end of 1995, I came across a similar venture by a few well-meaning friends in Toronto, Canada. That magazine is named KALA, a quarterly covering wide-ranging topics on Indian art and culture. A few specimen copies revealed a flattering list of editors, coordinators and contributors engaged in its production. Equally enviable is the number of patrons and sponsors it has succeeded in mustering. It is a concerted effort, one which deserves commendation.

Exchanging notes with two of its editors, Mrs. Suman Ramachandran and Mr. Ramani Ramachandran recently, it was revealed that all contributions, as in the case of PHOENIX, are voluntary. Hence the subscription rate of as low as dollars 20 a year. It works out roughly at Rs. 30 a copy, measely from Canadian standards.

But of greater significance mutually is the understanding reached that articles published in the one may be freely reproduced in the other. With contributors counting not beyond the fingers on one hand, the arrangement should prove particularly advantageous to PHOENIX

As a first step and with due acknowledgement, I am using the photograph of C.R. Acharyulu, the well-known Guru of Andhra Dance styles. He passed away on March 22, 1998 at Ahmedabad. But I delayed an obituary note on him for want of a good picture. That obligation is being fulfilled in this issue, courtesy KALA.



"Ankura" Prospects Mixed Fare



I. V. Soundarya

One significant point that emerged in "Ankura", the Karnataka Nrityakala Parishath's annual festival of budding dancers is that, not many of them have crossed the fledgling stage. Mediocrity seemingly persists, a few of them making one skeptical about the very standard observed for the traditional Ranga Pravesha.

In fact, that as the criterion itself seemed suspect. Ranga Pravesha, a formality in Bharathanatyam seems totally irrelevant in a State which espouses almost all the prevalent classical styles. Moreover, there are several Bharathanatyam aspirants who answer the requisite qualifications, but have, for various reasons, not sought to

enter the Stage through that tradition.

Under the circumstances, a change in the criterion seems worthwhile. The complexion of the festival also substantiates the argument. This year's eight-day fare which concluded on July 12, in all featured 24 dancers. Bharathanatyam dominated the scene, the sole exception being Chitra, a Kuchipudi student of Lakshmi Rajamani. That is because the latter has adapted the Ranga Pravesha procedure to introduce a new talent.

Even otherwise, the selection left much to be desired. The list makes it obvious that, it was not free from anomalies. While some in it made one wonder how she had managed to make the grade, there were one or two who appeared much above the average. I.V. Soundarya is a case in point. She is not only the senior-most among them, but certainly more experienced than many who had assumed the role of a 'guru' in the very same festival!

Her recital in the last slot on the concluding day was a refreshing finale to the mixed fare. Yes, Soundarya whose Nritha was well-defined, has made perceptible strides in the aspect of Abhinaya too. Gone is her forlorn look, her portrayal for the celebrated Varna Sakhiye (Shankara bharanam) testifying to hard work on the salient elements in both the Angikas and facials. Her florid Jathis matched well with chiselled glances, the two together

sustaining a balanced portrayal. There is no denying that Soundarya derived inspiration from the pellucid vocalism of her husband Srivatsa who acquitted himself as adroitly in Nattuvangam.

This certainly doesn't mean that there was no merit in the others. But how many of them could account for consistency is a moot point. If one recalls the debuts not long ago of Hitaishi or B.C. Malathi (Radha Sridhar), Gouri Kikkeri (Padmini Rao), Srivani (H. R. Keshavamurthy) or Navya Natarajan (Padmini Ramachandran), the turn out in their fare can hardly vouch for sustained continuity. Navya, of course has not lost her verve, but could do with a lot of restraint to gain a dignified stance. Nor was Rupa Kashyap (Jothi Pattabhiram) carry conviction in her portrayal. If her Nritya was pedestrian, her Abhinaya was rather perfunctory. Mediocrity was the hallmark in each case.

B.C. Harini (Sandhya-Kiran) was no exception, her 'angikas' showing scant respect



Malathi B. C.



Navya Natarajan

to linear norms. Nor could her facials live up to the demands of the weighty Charukeshi varnam. It is here that Shilpa S. Shivam (Padma Murali) scored. Though longish, her easy stance in the Varnam Annai Nee (Valachi) made an immediate impact. Her lively presence was infectious in its appeal. As impressive was Vidya Venkataram (Vasanthalakshmi), who blended the

Nritya and Abhinaya with effortless ease. More sprightly was T.K. Shoba (Revati Narasimhan). If her Nritya in the familiar Navaragamalika Varnam conformed to 'anga shuddham', her interpretation of the underlying Virahotkhandita was pointed. Only her 'shiro bhedas' fell short in direction. Swapna V.

Music, Dance Institutions are invited to send news & reports on their activities. Articles and features are also welcome.

Cassettes on Music & books may be sent for review.



Shobha T.K.

Bhat (U.K. Arun) was another dancer who aroused the interest of the discerning, though her Nritha had little depth.

Throughout the eight-day fare the one vocalist who held sway over the audience was D.S. Srivatsa, despite his vocalism betraying shortfalls at times. But Vasudha, a newcomer who had showed promise initially, seemed to be wilting both in her 'shruti' and adherence to form.

Gejje Ninaada

More purposeful, impactful was "Gejje Ninaada", a two-day dance festival got up by ebullient Kuchipudi dancer Vyjayanthi Kashi's Shambhavi Nritya Ranga. Though a votary of Kuchipudi, it was a laudable gesture of Vaiju to have made the fare a two pronged affair,

Bharathanatyam getting an equal share both in the academic sessions and the evening entertainment.

But the Bharathanatyam fare for one reason or the other failed to rise above the pales of mediocrity. If Vani Ganapathy in her solo appeared out of mood, the choreography for "Baby Nachiar" by Revathi Narasimhan fell short in its imagery, a copy-book type portrayal adding to its dreary flatness. The whole exercise could not take the viewer beyond a class-room routine.

The two-day festival was dedicated to the memory of the late C.R. Acharyulu, who passed away recently. He was not only the mentor of a whole generation of Kuchipudi dancers, but one who had popularised the rare Simhanandana and Mayuranandana pieces.

A glimpse of that expertise could be seen in a demonstration by one of the veteran's disciples, Smitha Sastry, presently the Chairperson of the Gujrat Sangeeth-Natak Academy. But neither her dancing nor the resultant picturisation could do credit to the maestro's reputation.



Harini B. C.



B. S. Hitaishi

It was left for Vaiju to make amends. Justly so, as she is in a way the inheritor of that tradition, being the student of Korada Narasimha Rao who is one of the best-known disciples of Acharyulu. And she did it with aplomb, her "Sharmishte", an Ekahara ballet testifying both to her dancerly skills and choreographic perception.

The story revolving round epic characters like Yayati, Devayani and Sharmishte is ideal for a Kuchipudi format. Vaiju came to her elements, dancing with practiced abandon to unfold the intriguing romantic triangle. Though the Nritha was minimal, her facially mixed coquetry, disappointment and hauteur tellingly in the denuement of the familiar saga.



Namitha Murugesh

Janhavi Jaiprakash's tuneful musical score and rendition combined well with Vaiju's adroit interpretation to heighten the emotional fervour in the simple, but forceful script of M.R. Sathyanarayana.

Ranga Praveshas

Bharathanatya Ranga Praveshas now-a-days hardly take one beyond the rudimentary. But Urmila Doraswamy's debut at the Ravindra Kalakshetra July last was a notable exception, displaying as it did features that were far above the run-of-the-mill.

Student of Padmini Rao, her stance was marked for its poise, the steady thattu-mettu as in the stately Jatiswaram (Ragamalika), following a sleek invocatory, interspersed with lovely Jathis. The same tautness and precision heightened Korvais in the Huseni Swarajathi, which structurally meets the demands of a Varnam. Urmila ran through the cascading

Theermanams with casual disdain, never ignoring the Anga Shuddham.

There was almost a similar degree of maturity in her Abhinaya, her facials vouching a comprehension of the underlying Nayika—Virahotkhandita. True, her 'drishti' has yet to gain in direction. But her well-wrought Hasthas easily carried conviction. Her portrayal for Enna Thavam (Kapi) was reassuring about her studied approach.

A little earlier, Namitha Murugesh, another of Padmini Rao's students making a bow at the same venue, was as effusive in her demeanour. Her laya as in the Jatiswaram (Chakravakam) spoke for her sound grounding, though her Angikas could do with some supple grace.

Her Adavus in the Varnam, Roopamu Joochi (Thodi) were



Urmila Doraswamy

as free-flowing, always right on the beat. But her weak point is her mukhija, the Virahotkhandita in the portrayal remaining elusive for the most part. The Padam, Dikku Theriyada, was more to her liking, its narrative finding a facile interpretation.

Shilpa Uthappa who made a bow around the same period at the same venue, was the youngest of the trio. Student of Padmini Ramachandran, Shilpa's mien almost appeared precocious, a faultless laya in the initial Nritta pieces giving the recital a bright start. Her Anga Shuddham was in place, though the Are Mandi was not steady.

But the confidence with which her Adavus sparkled in the Varnam (Purvikalyani), her glances unfailingly following the Hasthas, could do proud to a more experienced dancer. The same, however, cannot be said of her Abhinaya, which not unaccountably is in a formative stage. But as in Adum Deivam (Kambodi) revealed there is awareness and that is a positive sign!



Sapna V Bhat

Atreya

RRK: The Relentless Sadhaka

—T. V. Ramaprasad



Meeting him would make a youngster feel younger. Undoubtedly, the only living exponent of the seven stringed violin, a great performer, both as a soloist and an accompanist, having accompanied all stalwarts of yesteryears. An "A-top" artiste of the All India Radio, a reputed writer on music, a renowned teacher, for whom teaching is like a ritual.

An analytical musician whose studies on various aspects of ragas and thalas could be seen on the charts all over his living room. An inventor, trying to invent new bridges for his specially designed tamburas or trying to improve the sound by ripping apart a violin and rebuilding it. A loving grandfather who loves to spend time with his grandchildren. Here is a man who externally seems a hard

nut to crack, but is a highly sensitive and caring man from within. We could be speaking about none other than the robust and evergreen violin maestro R. R. Keshavamurthy (RRK).

Born to an orthodox Sankethi brahmin family in Rudrapatnam, RRK was trained to be a vocalist initially. His father Rudrapatnam Ramaswamaiah was a Sanskrit scholar and violinist. Young Keshavamurthy was not allowed to touch his father's violin, but he used to stealthily play on it. He was so fascinated by the instrument that he decided that he would rather be a violinist. This decision was also driven by the belief that he could really enrich his knowledge more as a violinist. "I knew I would learn not only my music, but also the music

of the musicians I accompany", he remarks.

From then RRK has never looked back. One of the seniormost violinists of the State, he has many awards and honours to his credit, prominent among them being the 'Sangeetha Sahitya Shiromani' from the Rambapuri Jagadguru, 'Sangeetha Vidyasagara' from the Sringeri Jagadguru, 'Sangeetha Kalarathna' from the Bangalore Gayana Samaja, the Chowdiah Memorial State award and crowning it all, the 'Kanaka Purandara Prashashti' of the Karnataka Government.

Ultimate Saadhaka

He opines that there is no Siddhi in music, it is only Saadhana all the way. A musician must always practice and aim high towards an ideal 'I practice thanam and other aspects every day', says the master. Once when Karnataka Ganakala Parishath organised a young musicians conference at Chennai, the senior office bearers of the Parishath including RRK, attended the conference. When everyone alighted the train at Chennai, RRK was found carrying his violin. One of the musicians asked in good humour why he needed the violin for a young artists festival, Pat came the reply, "A musician, especially an instrumentalist must practice everyday and I feel incomplete if I do not practice for a single day".

An Erudite Scholar

RRK has an inexhaustible

repertoire of songs, an authority on Nade and Avadhana Pallavis. He is well versed in Sanskrit and English and he dared to write books on music and publish them himself. His aim was to remove the ignorance of the people about music. He has authored as many as 19 titles, his 'Ragakosha' and 'Ragalakshana' a must for all musicians. It is an authoritative work on Ragas, with his own practical notes of how each raga should be rendered, which is refreshing as he has written the book with his experience both as a musicologist and performing musician.

The Eternal Student

RRK believes that a teacher must be a good student himself. Teaching replenishes and perfects his knowledge. He says, "I find it challenging to teach young and bright students. Sometimes before teaching them, I have to be well prepared myself."

He has produced several students during his distinguished Career, a count which even he himself might have lost. Prominent among them are the late Anoor Ramakrishna, the late Mathur Shankaramurthy, T. Rukmini, T. S. Sathyavathi, and in the younger generation artistes like T. V. Ramprasad, Hamsini Nagendra and Dr. S. Jyotsna.

Stalwarts All

RRK holds Tiger Vardachariar as one of the greatest musicians of this century. "His open throated singing, his deep rooted theoretical knowledge, his brilliance in presentation and analytical approach is still unmatched." Among others he reels the names of great

stalwarts like T. R. Mahalingam, Bidaram Krishnappa, Musiri Subramania Iyer, Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar, Karaikudi Brothers, Rajarathnam Pillai, Pushpavanam, et al.

He is happy that youngsters today have an holistic approach to music. They take pains in understanding the theory behind music. Contrarily, he feels musicians of yesteryears did not pay much attention to theory. "The awareness of theory grew after Prof Sambamurthy's efforts", he says.



RRK is also a connoisseur of Hindustani music having heard great master like Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Dr. Allauddin Khan, Fayaz Khan and Nathu Khan. He has the highest respect for women and their capabilities. He always feels that they have much more potential, dedication and sincerity than men. One could hear him calling some female students as 'Mahathaayi'.

The other side

When he is not in class, he likes to spend time with his children and grandchildren. He admires their intelligence

and pranks. He is also a philanthropist having contributed to various good causes, including the building of the Purandara Mantapa at Mulbagal. The once feared RRK is a very endearing teacher in class.

"A good student is like a spotless mirror, into which if a Guru looks will see a pleasant face, A bad student is like a cracked mirror reflecting only a distorted image." He says every instrumentalist should learn to sing. He must sing the lyrics aloud before playing on the instrument. If not he may fail to bring out the 'bhava' of the song and the raga. His music will never reach extraordinary heights.

The present day musicians, he feels, should take up more challenging Ragas like Saveri, Yadukulakambhoji, Attana, Harikamboji, Begada, Kedara Gowla etc. rather than trying out the pliable ragas. He is afraid that if these ragas are not tried, they may fade away from the Rasika's minds.

About an artiste's responsibility, he says a musician is a national property. He must contribute his best to society. Again knowing that he is a national property, the musician must have control over his body and mind. RRK himself is a monumental example of a well-preserved artiste. He has never skipped his daily yoga, 'Baski', pooja. Even to this day, he drinks a copper mug full of water as soon as he gets up. This, he says, helps to keep his body cool and regulate the digestive system. He feels a musicians' music begins to ripen only at around 50 years of age and if at that age he is incapacitated or passes away, it is a national loss!

Living Example Of Aesthetic Endeavour

Prameela Lochan

In that moment, she had inexplicably caught my attention completely. Her vivaciousness, graciousness, her spirit and zest towards the field of music and dance, simplicity and genuinity were all qualities that changed my admiration for her to adulation. She helped me decide my future and to live life the way I found most interesting yet upholding values and standards in the field of art and culture. Perhaps the only regret was having lost the opportunity of working with her after moving to Bangalore.

Born in Kerala, she was the eldest daughter of the late Prof. P. Sankaran Nambiyar, an erudite scholar, writer and educationist.

Susheela Misra herself was highly educated with a Master's degree in English literature from the Presidency College, Madras. Although, a regular broadcaster of Carnatic music in Madras, she changed over to the Hindustani style and acquired a Bachelor's degree from the Bhatkhande College in Lucknow where she settled down after her marriage to Dr. S. S. Misra, a physician of international renown. From 1944, Susheelaji was a regular broadcaster of Hindustani classical and light classical music from Akashwani, Lucknow.

With over 500 articles published in leading journals

and several books to her credit, she is remembered for her contribution towards popularising music and dance through publications, Akashvani and Television.

In the popular series for Lucknow Doordarshan, 'Phan Aur Phankar', she had interviewed numerous celebrity musicians and dancers such as Girija Devi, Rukmini Devi Arundale, Pt. Kishen Maharaj, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Dr. Ratanjankar and many more.



To honour her services to the field the Bharatiya Sangeet and Lalit Kala Academy of Kanpur in 1965, conferred their Doctrate on her and in 1976 the UP Sangeet Academy conferred its Fellowship on her.

Recognition and prestigious awards came her way, but she remained rooted in all humility to her dedication and kept on working to her very end. Two days before she passed away,

Susheelaji was engrossed in dictating for two other books, Contemporary Musicians of North and South and Dagar Brothers.

Her spirit, to the very end, remained vital, seeking, through music, the vital truth of life.

Indeed, Susheelaji shall remain an eternal part of all art lovers, the lay man and the connoisseur as a living example of artistic endeavour that had created no barriers of language, caste, region and other complexities. It is to people like her that the subsequent generation of artistes owe their gratitude and gain in learning.

A few books by Susheela Misra

1. Great Masters of Hindustani Music (1981)
2. Music Makers of the Bhatkhande College of Hindustani Music (Sangeet Research Academy Publication)
3. Music Profiles (1955)
4. Musical Heritage of Lucknow (1991)
5. Some Dancers of India
6. Invitation to Indian Dances (1987).

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Distortion, Disfiguration

Distortion is a form of Art. The artist resorts to it to arrive at an idea, disregarding the proportions in the natural world. As against this, disfiguration is the work of a vandal, as it were a fanatic's passtime. From time immemorial our concepts, ideals, idols and icons are being uninterruptedly subjected to such eccentricities. In either case, the perpetrators have not succeeded in obliterating those notions. In a way it might have strengthened them. Maybe there have inevitably been protests in certain quarters. But by and large the literati has learnt to ignore such trends with the contempt they deserve. It is equally true that an undue attention, especially on a government level might give it all a notoriety which is certainly not unwelcome to the concerned. But for Khomeini's "Fatwa" *Satanic Verses* couldn't have become a best-seller overnight. Moreover, such moves will invariably invite the wrath of some intellectuals. They will voice their protest under the guise of freedom of expression.

Under the circumstances, the government should leave it to the judgment of the people and the Press to tackle such perversities. Its indifference will make the matter that much easier to be resolved. True, some of the happenings in the cultural arena of the country today have vitiated the atmosphere and given rise to avoidable controversies. Moves like portraying an epic character like Sita in the nude, questioning the integrity of a

father figure like Mahatma Gandhi or misrepresenting some facts relating to the saintly life of a universally-revered monk like Swami Vivekananda are irritants foreboding emotional tensions. It is equally true that a hundred Hussains cannot besmear the divine presence of Sita, as much as a thousand Godses cannot discredit Gandhiji's invaluable services in the cause of the country's freedom. Far better known to the world is the reputation of Swamiji as the gentle colossus who spread the message of

unity of all religions, "Sarva Dharma Samanvaya". A single film by howsoever popular a director or producer cannot influence public opinion against stark realities. Indeed, the images of such celebrities, as much as that of crusaders like an Ambedkar are etched too indelibly in the recesses of innumerable men and women the world over. Why unnecessarily doubt the potential of such immortals to survive any amount of distortion or disfigurement?

— S.N. Chandrasekhar

Quiz

Quiz on Folk Arts of Karnataka

1. A ritual folk dance dedicated to Shakti prevalent in the districts of Mandya, Kolar and Bangalore. The face of the goddess is tied to a bamboo frame which adorns the head of the dancer while he dances.
(Puja Kunitha, Veeragase, Mandala Kunitha)
2. The tribals of North Karnataka, Gondas, perform a dance that expresses the tribals' love for life.
(Mandala Kunitha, Dollu Kunitha, Somana Kunitha)
3. The best-known folk theatre form that comprises music, dance and theatre, highlighting both folk and classical elements.
(Sutradra-bombe Ata, Bailata, Yakshagana)
4. A macho art form based on the story of the demon, Dollasura.
(Nandi Dhawaja, Karaga, Dollu Kunitha)
5. The Karaga worship is based on
(Sita, Draupadi, Gauri)

Quiz Master

Quiz on Kathak answered :

1. Tatkar, 2. Tabala, 3. Brahmins, 4. Madame Menaka, 5. Bindadin Maharaj, 6. Baluji.

From Here And There



T. V. Ramaprasad and Indira Kadambi

Husband and Wife Team

T. V. Ramaprasad and Indira Kadambi, the popular husband and wife team, respectively well-known performers in Carnatic music and Bharathanatyam, has just returned after a successful tour of Europe and America. For Ramaprasad, it was a tour in quick succession to a similar one last year. Indira, on her first trip abroad, conducted workshops in Bharathanatyam and Mohini Attam, besides performing in premier cities.

At a young age, Ramaprasad has established himself not only as a reliable performer, but as a good teacher too. Though his main focus in the US was on teaching, he fulfilled 17 concert engagements in 1997 and 15 this year, billed along with

formidable names like T. N. Seshagopalan, Trichur Ramachandran and M. S. Sheela.

Indira delivered lectures at the Alabama University and gave a lecture-demonstration on Bharathanatyam in Los Angeles. These proved as popular as her performances.

The couple later toured Germany, Austria, France and the United Kingdom and gave around 10 performances and conducted five workshops. Wide coverage in German newspapers and interviews over the radio formed part of their useful tour.

Off on Concert Trip

Young Carnatic vocalist Srinath of Mysore, left on a tour of Malaysia and the US to attend the annual music conferences over there. He is a member of the staff in the

music faculty of Gnanaganga Vidya Peetha, Mysore.

Srinath, a disciple of Dr. S. Ramanathan and Rudrapatnam Narayana Swamy, is accompanied by B.S. S. Rao, Secretary of Sri Lalithakala Dance Academy. The tour is organised by Messrs. Rajalingam Productions, Malaysia and the Indian Cultural Arts Society, Virginia. Their trip is sponsored among others by Dr. Veerendra Heggade of Dharmasthala and Travel Tours of Bangalore.

Successful Tour

The noted Bharathanatyam exponent Uma Rao, Director, Sri Lalithakala Dance Academy, Mysore, has just returned after a tour of Japan and the U.S. The tour was sponsored by the Contemporary Dance Company, Tokyo.

Besides some teaching assignments, Uma gave a few lecture-demonstrations for the Tokyo University and at Berkeley (U.S.A.). Choreographing a Kannada lyric on Goddess Chamundeswari for the Japanese students in the



Mysore Srinath

Tokyo Dance Company was the highlight of Uma's successful tour.

Wedding bells for Vrunda

Talking of husband and wife teams, wedding bells rang for Vrunda Nanavaty, the London-born, Bangalore-based, Kalakshetra-trained Bharathanatyam dancer. She got married in Bombay on July 2 to Hemang Mehta, who has already made a name as a worthy disciple of the renowned Hindustani vocalist Pandit Jesraj.

Earlier, Vrunda had won laurels when she presented a Bharathanatyam recital for the Poona Sangeetha Sabha. Many viewers in the packed auditorium had termed the 120-minute programme as "it surpassed all expectations".

As rewarding for her was the experience of dancing at the Indian Consulate in Dubai before that.

'Ganakala Bushana'

The conferment of the title "Ganakala Bushana" on H.N. Rajanna, the local musician was the highlight of the Kanaka - Purandhara Sangeetotsava in Bhadravati recently. The Sangeetha Sabha was Founded by K. Manjappa, another popular artiste of the city.

The six-day festival was marked by concerts by popular Vidwans in the evenings. Artistes H.N. Sharada, H.G. Anantha, B.S. Nagaraj and C.R. Ramachandra were also honoured on the occasion.

Vidwan K.G. Ramaswamy eulogised the services of Rajanna in the field of music. K.S. Mohankumar, Secretary of the sabha, also spoke.



H. N. Rajanna feted

"Vainika Sreshta"

The title "Vainika Vara Sreshta" was conferred on the popular Veena Vidwan R.K. Suryanarayana at a gala function in the Chowdaiah Memorial Hall on June 20. The function was organised by a felicitation committee comprising friends, fellow-artistes, admirers and disciples of the maestro who had recently recovered from an anxious ailment.

Speakers with veteran vocalist R. K. Srikantan in the lead, paid handsome tributes to the leading vainika for his contribution both as a seasoned performer and a

successful Guru. Dr. Jeevaraj Alva and K. K. Murthy were among the other speakers. Veena artiste Suma Sudheendra welcomed the gathering and Shanti Rao, a senior student of the Guru proposed a vote of thanks.

The renowned violin virtuoso Kunnakkudi Vaidyanathan conferred the coveted title on Suryanarayana. A 'Chaturdasa veena concert' by the disciples of the Vidwan formed part of the impressive celebrations.

Kusuma Rao

World Council for Carnatic Music

"Carnatic music into the 21st century" was the theme of the First International Carnatic Music Conference in Durban early this year. The three-day meet beginning April 10 was jointly organised by the International Centre for Performing Arts and the University of Durban.

The conference at which the key-note address was delivered by Dr. E. Angayarkanni of Tanjavur,



H. S. Anasuya Kulkarni (Angklung), Mr. Pragalathan Vadival (Kanjira) at the Durban Conference on Carnatic Music

dealt with wide-ranging topics connected with the subject. Prof. Kathiravelu Shivabalan of Sri Lanka, Dr. S. A. K. Durga of Madras, Jagadeeshan and Vinayagi Goviner of South Africa, T. Shanmugasundaran and P. T. Chelladurai of Madras, Muthulakshmi Ranganathan of Ontario, Dr. Lakshmi Jayan of U.K., Dr. Salem Jayalakshmi, Harsha Prahlad of Botswana and H. S. Anasuya Kulkarni of Bangalore were among the distinguished speakers.

One of the points observed during the discussions was that influence of music of one country on another cannot be avoided. In fact, some of the musical instruments of foreign origin have inexorably become part of Carnatic music.

In this connection, Anasuya Kulkarni who has adapted Anklung, the Indonesian bamboo instrument to the Carnatic style, explained the technique of playing it. The audience was fascinated at the rich and melodic patterns that emanated from the bamboo

contraption.

The talk "on Influence of Carnatak music on Western music" by Dr. S.A.K. Durga was very educative. In the African and Indian rhythms by Hareesh Prahlad, one could see compatibility between the two systems of rhythm. In Inter-culturalism Surya Governder of South Africa brought about fusion of Zulu and Bharatanatyam. Application of Carnatak music in Church music was an eye-opener to many.

The Conference adopted a resolution to establish a "World Council of South Indian Music". A committee of seven, two from South Africa, India and one each from Canada, U.K., Malaysia was elected to draft a constitution. An interesting proposal which had a unanimous support was the acceptance of the key board as an accompanying instrument.

According to a Press release of the Percussive Arts Centre, Bangalore, the conference was a success, its objectives achieved in toto.

Commendable

It is commendable that B. Bhavyalakshmi of Calicut who



Bhavyalakshmi B.

has already made a mark as a promising vocalist has scored First Rank in the final B.A. (Music).

Bhavya has the renowned T.V. Shankaranarayan among her gurus.

OBITUARY



Guru C.R. Acharyulu, a leading exponent of dance styles of Andhra Pradesh, passed away on March 22, 1998. An authority on Kuchipudi, Chikkamarri Ramacharyulu hailed from a traditional Archik family of Nuzvid 'Samsthanam' of Krishna district. He learnt the Natyamela of Kuchipudi from Vedantam Lakshmi-Narayana Sastry. The two together are not only credited

with creating the solo form in the style, but also to have taken the art form outside the village.

When in 1947 Mrinalini Sarabhai set up the Darpana Academy of Performing Arts in Ahmedabad, she invited Acharyulu to join it and he served on its faculty to the last day of his life on earth.

Acharyulu was a familiar figure in the local dance circles too. At the behest of some local enthusiasts at different points of time in the early seventies, he had conducted short courses in rare numbers like Simhanandana and Mayura nritya. He had revived these

numbers, the respective pictures emerging on the surface at the conclusion of each dance. The novelty has long lost favour with local dancers, maybe because mastery over it is not easily attained. But the form as such has not been completely obliterated. Acharyulu's disciples like Mallika Sarabhai, Smitha Shastri (presently Chairperson, Gujarat Sangeet-Natak Academy), Dr. Korada Narasimha Rao, Yamini Krishnamurthy to name only a few, may yet breathe new life into it to keep their mentor's memory alive!

ESSENCE

More Revolutions—Great Masters

S.N. Sivaswamy

The three-minute marvels on 78 R.P.M. records provided us with an endless variety of music. Besides classical music of the masters, there were Gazals by the redoubtable Akhtari Bai Faizababi (Later famous as Begum Akhtar) and other exponents. There were any number of compositions by modern composers including Ravindranath Tagore. There were Bhajans, Patriotic songs, Stage songs, and last but not least, a vast selection of film songs.

Digging out from my memory, I can readily recall some real gems of the lighter variety of songs which enthralled us at that time. Two of the extraordinarily talented artistes in the thirties were S.G. Kittappa, the doyen of Tamil theatre of the pre-talkie film era, and later on, K.L. Saigal from the Hindi Cinema. Kittappa was equipped with a stentorian voice, a necessity during those mikeless theatre days. I do not know how good an actor he was, not having seen his plays, but knew that he was the hero of many stage hits. Obviously he had been tutored in classical music, as vouched by his recordings of 'Geetharthamu' (Surati) and 'Everani' (Nada Chinthamani), as also the Vrittam 'Kodaiyile'. His 'Elloreyum' and the crisp, superfast, 'Mahatripura Roopa Sundari' were the most remarkable of his renderings, on 78 R.P.M.

Unlike Kittappa, Kundan Lal Saigal was a product of the Silver Screen, having virtually grown up with the New

Theaters of Calcutta under the tutelage of stalwarts of creative music like Timir Baran, R.C. Boral, and Punkaj Mullick, the last-named himself a distinguished singer. Saigal soon turned out to be a phenomenal success. His songs from the film 'Street Singer' ('Babul Mora' among them), 'Devadas', 'Chandi Das' and 'Dushman' are among the all-time greats of film music. The record 'Duniya Rangrangili Baba' from 'Dharti Mata' featuring Saigal, K.C. Dey and Kannan Bala was a top seller. Indeed, Saigal's music set a style and standard for chaste and refreshing film melodies different from the fanciful, although catchy tunes we had heard till then.

In the South, after S.G. Kittappa arrived another giant in the light music arena, who had migrated from the music platform to the screen, producing a number of resounding successes on the gramophone disc, namely, M.K. Thyagaraja Bhagavathar. His duets with M.L. Vasantha Kumari like 'Angum Ingum Yengum Inbame' and 'Yennanandam' were most enchanting. One wishes somebody had preserved them for posterity.

Meanwhile, the Marathi stage presented a brilliant star, Balagandharva, whose reputation as an actor had reached me even before his gramophone records. I had seen only one of his plays, but heard many songs later on which had established him as a singing sensation. 'Swakulatara Suta', 'Mama

Atma', 'Pandu Nripati Janaka Jaya' are all landmarks of the Marathi stage music and they were all popular not only in Maharashtra but in all other parts of the country.

The beauty of Tamil and Marathi stage music lay in its pronounced classical bias, while its ebullience was due to the individual accomplishment of the actor-singers. Musically qualified composers wrote the songs which were basically classical, but the freedom and abandon with which the artiste rendered them gave them a distinct character of their own.

Coming back to film music, which formed the bulk of recorded music in our collections, I make special mention of outstanding successes of all times. One was Ameerbai Karnataki's haunting song in Bhimpalasi, 'Beena Madhura Madhura' (from the film Rama Rajya), and the other, Shantha Apte's lively ditty 'Suno Suno ye banake prani' (from the film Amarjyothi), both of which held most film buffs, young and old in raptures. They were essayed at musical evenings and music competitions. They issued forth from the gramophones of restaurants and tea shops. The tune of 'Beena Madhura Madhura' was copied in Tamil as 'Kandan Karunai' and recorded by none other than D.K. Pattammal.

From the Telugu light music world, the ones that stir my memory are Balasaraswathi and Rajeshwara Rao, whose duets

were most tuneful, and Bhanumathi who was a versatile film personality of those days and sang many a film classic. Of this genre, though not in the same class, was our own K. Ashwathamma whose record "Haa priya prashanta hridaya" was a great favourite and must have sold in the thousands.

Speaking of favourites, I

must not forget Parasuram's 'Man Saph Tera' from the film "Unexpeated" whose tune was so simple that even small children loved to sing it. It was a popular choice of most mendicants on railway trains and in the bus stands in our younger days.

Apart from modern compositions, pure classical music was also attempted by

many film makers of the day, but three outstanding examples will suffice. The discs I was never tired of listening to were 'Jhanaka jhanaka payala baje' (Amir Khan) 'Aaj gavat man mero' (sung by Ameer Khan and D.V. Paluskar in the film 'Baiju Bawara'), and Bade Gulam Ali's majestic khyal in 'Mughal-E-Azam'.

(Concluded)

Protima: Enigma Persists



In her tragic, untimely death as much as it has been in her momentous life, Protima Gauri Bedi has remained what she ever loved to be an enigma. Even as news trickled from the sordid scenes in Pithoragarh about the devastating landslides, her friends and admirers in the world of performing arts have been made to keep their fingers crossed about her fate.

It is vacillating, the reports keeping them all the time guessing. Just as one report would declare that her body was found, another source almost instantaneously denied it. But all accounts indicate that the chances of her having survived the catastrophe are alas bleak. The end has become as turbulent as her life has been!

Yes, her life has been an enigma no less. Yet nobody can deny that Protima enjoyed every moment of that romantic existence of less than 50 years. Whether as a career model or as a vivacious dancer, the fullness of her involvement was never in doubt.

Protima was as much known for her warm-heartedness. Once a friendship was struck, for her there was no question of distancing from it. There was separation too in her wedlock, but there was no rancour on either side. In fact, at every given opportunity, her former life-partner, Kabir Bedi who is as celebrated an artiste as herself, would make a dash to the City to see her dance. And who could resist her dance. For sheer sense of

brilliance there could be few parallels.

The case with her brain child, Nrityagram was no different. From the first day when the arid wilderness had transformed itself into a paradise, thanks to her relentless efforts, she made her intentions clear. She was determined to see that local interest was not overlooked, substantiated in her giving preference to Bharathanatyam as the first among the 'gurukulas' to spring up in the sprawling campus. Usha Iyengar and Indira Kadambi, both local exponents in the style were put in charge of the classes.

Even in the recitals organised by the dance village from time to time, Protima saw to it that adequate opportunities were thrown open to local talent. Despite her conflicting statements about the future of the Centre, Protima had made sure of a second line. In Lynn Fernandes and Surupa Sen, devoted as both are as much to their mentor as to dance art, one can be rest assured that the dreamland of Protima will soon become a monument to her cherished memory.

ESSENCE

Rising Stars of Mysore



S. Rajalakshmi (On Veena)

In keeping with its innovative ideas, the Devagiri Sangeeth Sabha had got up a unique five-day musical event end of June. It was a concert series, exclusively by artistes from Mysore, including the accompanists.

Another noteworthy feature of that interesting series featuring "Rising Stars of Mysore", was that a Raga-Thana-Pallavi was a must for each artiste, the Sabha itself assigning the Raga so that there was no repetition. The experiment proved deservedly successful.

Flutist T. R. Srinath gave the festival a flying start, followed by equally popular names like Vainika S. Rajalakshmi, Vocalist R. N. Srilata and Vocal dueters G. S. Kamala and G. S. Rajalakshmi. They all lived upto expectation.

They are all as familiar names in the musical firmament of the State as the ebullient violin duo M. Nagaraj and M. Manjunath. Their concert on the concluding day, incidentally was the 250th concert of the Sabha, a fact that obviously inspired the duo to come out with another of their sterling recitals. It was predictably mellifluous, full of verve and virtuosity.

Before dwelling on the assigned Raga, Rasikapriya, there was melodic outburst of ditties in Nagaswaravali, Phalamanjari, Ananda-Bhairavi and Thodi, each invested with haunting swara passages. The main Raga itself stood out for its romantic fervour, the Thanam breaking into an array of lovely aria including Dwijavanti, Hindola, Shama, Desh and Surati. The Pallavi in Chatushra Jhampe in Khanda Nadai was as

proficient in its modal lilt as in its layakari.

Ramaprasad Impresses

Sri Thyagaraja Gana Sabha, Rajajinagar, featured a vocal recital by T. V. Ramaprasad who has just returned after a successful performing-cum-teaching assignment abroad, on July 19. It was easy to see that the youngster has the makings of a top vocalist.

The opening Shahana Varnam itself created a sleek musical atmosphere which endured throughout the evening. Gifted with a sonorous voice, Prasad aired a fairly elaborate Alap for Sunadavinodini, strengthening its contours with Devadideva of Vasudeva-charya. 'Bhava'-laden, artiste

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Vainika C. Krishnamurthy

enriched by pleasing sangatis. Dikshitar's classic Chintaya Ma Kandamoola Kandam was the corresponding kriti. The niraval and swara phrases at Mangalakara Mandahasa Vadanam were replete with lovely swara combinations and 'rasabhava' to boot.

Shanmukhapriya was Prasad's choice for Raga-Thana-Pallavi, a feature which is slowly disappearing from the concert stage. Blending the musical and technical aspects neatly, he enlivened the Pallavi, Meenakshi Mamadurai Meenakshi Matangi Marakatangi in Mishra Khanda nadai pleasingly before winding up the concert with a couple of devaranamas and a thillana.

Prasad was ably supported by A. R. Krishnamurthy on the violin, H. S. Sudheendra on mridangam and Chandramouli on Khanjeera-Kusuma Rao.

'Mayavi' Vainika

Six years ago, on July 15,

the illustrious Semmangudi "Mama" called him a Mayavi—a man who vanishes and surfaces on and of but as destiny would have it, the Mayavi, Vainika C. Krishnamurthy, vanished the very next day never to surface again.

Born in a family of a hoary musical tradition, he was under the tutelage of one of the most popular vainikas in living memory V. Doraiswamy Iyengar. A true musician that he was, he lived and breathed music. He excelled as a Guru with a great following. A dedicated teacher he worked as much for his students' welfare as his own. Krishnamurthy developed a special affinity with each student. Rightful homage to this Bhairavi was being paid by his students and wife, every year. A Veena competition for non-professionals and a Veena concert are arranged every July 16. This year two concerts were arranged. The first by R. Venkataraman on July 16 supported by Sri Cheluvraj

H.P. RAMACHAR



Music circles in the State and else- where will welcome the news that H.P. Ramachar, veteran Khanjira Vidwan, has been elected to preside over the forthcoming annual music conference of Bangalore Gayana Samaja. It is a distinction which he richly deserves and has not come a day too early.

According to Gayana Samrajya, the Samaja bulletin, the eigh-day conference is slated from October 4, 1998. The coveted title "Sangeetha Kala Ratna" will be conferred on the noted percussionist at the conference.

[Mridangam] and Sri Srisaila [ghatam] Venkataraman's litling music was a befitting tribute to Vidwan C. Krishnamurthy. The next evening there was yet another unforgettable veena performance by veteran R. Pichumani Iyer with H. S. Sudheendra (mridangam) and Sri Chakravarthy (Ghatam).

A befitting finale to the two-day programme was a talk by Sri M. V. Subramanya recollecting memorable moments with C. Krishnamurthy. As he rightly put it, Krishnamurthy lives in the melody of veena to all his friends, students, near and dear-Janaki.

□

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